

# Sermon for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

*“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division” (Luke 12:51).*

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Last week, presidential candidate Joe Biden told a crowd at the Iowa State Fair,

“We choose unity over division. We choose science over fiction.

We choose truth over *facts*.”

The crowd roared in agreement, for the world delights to *choose for itself* what is true... regardless of facts!

It’s a sign of the times.

Gender is now fluid...

WE now choose whether we are male, female, or none of the above.

States across the nation are now using “gender-neutral” birth certificates so that no sex is declared, regardless of the external anatomy.

In fact, parents in New York City and other states may actually change their children’s gender on their birth certificates until they reach age 18.

It's  
a sign of the times.

Recently,  
the lesbian archbishopess of the Lutheran church in Sweden has ordered the  
removal of all crosses from their sanctuaries so as not to offend the Muslims.

Metropolitan  
Kallistos Ware of the Eastern Orthodox church openly supports "homosexual  
marriage."

And  
closer to home, Concordia Portland, an LCMS University, has a "Gender and  
Sexuality Resource Center" that recently promoted LGBTQ History Month,  
"acknowledging the  
complexity of gay, lesbian, trans, queer, questioning, and ally, etc.  
identities."

At Concordia St.  
Paul, you can join the "PEACE Club" (People Encouraging Acceptance Connection  
and Equality) which is "dedicated to creating an inclusive place for all  
students, particularly members of the LGBTQI community."

These  
are all just signs of the times.

And  
what times are these?

These are, of course, the Last times -

the Last Days in  
which we find not only wars and rumors of war, famine, and disaster of every  
kind,

but  
also the whole-sale rejection of absolute truth.

The result has been

anger, hostility, social unrest, depression, drug addiction, and despair such as we have never seen.

But you  
know what? You better not say anything -

not unless you want  
to be labeled an “intolerant hateful homophobic racist bigot...” or worse.

No, if  
you want to have peace in this world,

you’d better just  
keep quiet and keep your little Bible-thumpin’ views to yourself... Or not...

For the  
fact is, there are no surprises here, right?

As I’ve said, these are all just “signs of the times” -

signs of ALL time,  
in fact, since Adam and Eve first bit into that promise that we could determine  
what was true for ourselves.

These  
are the signs of a world in chaos, in misery and confusion, divorced from God  
and the good order He provided,

destined for death and eternal condemnation.

In  
other words, these are the signs of sin...

the  
very sin that Jesus came to save us from.

Jesus  
said, “I came to cast fire on the earth” (Luke 12:49), that is,

to bring this rot and ruin to an end!

And He  
did -

He brought the fiery  
wrath of God's judgement down from heaven, not upon US as we deserved, but  
upon  
Himself in our place.

As He  
promised in our text, "I have a baptism to be baptized with" -

a refining fire, if you will -

a death on the cross  
that He anguished over until it was accomplished. (Luke 12:50)

But now  
it IS accomplished. It IS finished.

In Christ crucified  
and risen, all humanity has been set free from the bonds of sin and death,  
free  
from Satan's lie that we can *choose* the truth for ourselves.

For we *have*  
the truth spelled out for us plainly in God's Word.

As a new creation  
through our Baptism into Christ's fiery death and glorious resurrection, we  
don't have to go the way of rack and ruin anymore.

As those born anew  
of the Spirit, we no longer set our minds on the things of the flesh, but on  
the things of the Spirit who sets us free to live by the Truth and to follow in  
the Way that leads to eternal life.

The  
only problem is, not everyone wants this.

Many are still clinging to the devil's lies.

They

have been duped into thinking that most people, especially themselves, are basically good, and that they can determine the best way for themselves *and* their neighbor to live in this world.

They treasure the

ability to choose what is true for themselves, even to the extent of choosing “truth over facts.”

They are convinced

we can make this world a better place and redeem ourselves if only we nod along, get along, and work together.

Of

course, anybody who *doesn't* agree with their version of the truth is evil and must be put down and eliminated.

Again,

no surprises here, right?

After all, in

practically the same breath that Jesus points to His impending sacrifice in today's Gospel reading,

He

tells us this very sacrifice will cause great division.

“You

think my coming will bring peace to this world? Think again!

There will not be peace in this world, but rather division -

division between

father and son, daughter and mother, three against two, two against three -

division between

those who order their lives in accordance with God's Word and those who insist on choosing their own truth;

division between

those who believe they are sinners and live from Christ's forgiveness, and those who do not...

And you  
know what? This division is going to be ugly -  
always has been, always will be.

Jesus made it clear,  
"If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).

The  
problem is, very few, if any of us, have ever had to deal with persecution the likes of which is beginning to unfold around us.

We're entering into a  
new era - the Last Days when the Western world is declaring war against the church.

It's  
still subtle - we don't have lions and gladiators just yet...

But the opposition is ramping up, and it is getting serious.

Just  
this past week, a couple of high-profile evangelicals have renounced their faith, NOT because they were ignorant of the basic tenets of Christianity, but because of the adversity associated with upholding those tenets!

According to an  
article by David French, there is a lack of "pure moral courage and resolve to live [by] faith in the face of cultural headwinds."

In  
other words, people just aren't prepared to face what's coming, and they'd rather leave the church, or at the very least, seek cover and remain silent,

than push back against the world, the devil, and his lies.

And  
that's not good...

For  
really, there is only one task to which the Church - the Christian - YOU and ME  
- have been called in these Last Days -

only one thing entrusted to our care:

We  
are to uphold the Word of Truth.

In  
Revelation, Jesus tells us, "I am coming soon.

Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown"  
(Rev 3:11).

Hold  
fast to the Truth, the Word of God, the faithful testimony that we SHARE with  
Jesus for the life of the world.

For we are the very means by which Jesus continues His work  
of salvation -

the very means by  
which He shows people the sign of the times, the peril and chaos that brings  
such misery,

that they might turn  
from their sin and have peace and a well-ordered life in relationship with God  
and with one another.

In  
fact, it is this faithful stance on the Word of Truth alone that can rescue  
people from their suffering -

to do anything less is to abandon them to sin, death, and  
hell.

Of course, the devil and the world do NOT want the Truth, and so they will despise you.

When you reject their idols and their error, they will view it as an attack on their very being, and they will fight back.

They will ridicule you and condemn you.

They will try to hurt you.

And a day is coming when they may even imprison you or kill you.

Already we have seen vicious attacks against bakers, photographers, florists, and various professionals and business owners who have taken their stand on the truth.

Who knows what might happen after I post this sermon on our website or send it out by email...

After the Clarion Ledger published a smear several weeks ago that identified Christ Lutheran with some unpopular political views,

how long before picketers start showing up on Sunday mornings to harass us or film us going in and out of church,

hoping to intimidate us for our views on gender, marriage, homosexuality, abortion, evolution... the Truth? (Tx Larry Bean, Gottesdienst, 8/14/19).

These tactics are already being employed in some places,

and they can cost you your job, your reputation, your credibility...



perhaps  
even your life...

Are  
you ready?

The  
answer is, yes, of course you are!

For you are people of faith.

You  
live by faith, not by fear.

Like that  
magnificent cloud of witnesses who have gone before us,

you have heard the Word of Promise,

and  
you know you're in Good Hands.

What's  
more, you have seen the "Signs of the Times" -

not just the sign of  
sin and death consuming this world, but the Sign of Jonah-

the  
sign for ALL time -

the sign of Christ  
crucified and risen for your victory over sin, death, and hell.

Through  
the sign of your Baptism, you have already the promise of His victory.

Through the sign of  
Christ's body and blood, you now have Christ in you, the author and perfecter  
of our faith,

who  
for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,  
despising the shame,  
that He might claim the victory over sin and save the world.

And  
now, participating *with* Jesus in this work He continues to do,  
you head into the  
jaws of an ugly, angry world, holding fast the Word of truth,  
so that even if you  
appear to be defeated, the victory is being won and God's kingdom comes!

For to take the  
field against the devil and die a martyr's death is NOT to take the field and  
lose, as Jesus' own death on the cross testifies,

but  
to take the field and win!

So do  
not be afraid.

Rather, consider the  
Words Jesus speaks in the verses just before our reading today: Blessed are  
those who hear the Word of God and keep it (Luke 11:28).

Do not fear those  
who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. (Luke  
12:4).

For everyone who  
acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the  
angels of God (Luke 12:8).

Fear  
not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the  
kingdom (Luke 12:32).

Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning (Luke 12:35),

for “no one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light (v33).

Of course, if you have feared, fallen, or failed in the task entrusted to you, by all means, repent!

Repent, and rejoice! For yours is the victory in Christ.

The signs are all there:

the Word of forgiveness, the water of life, the Body and Blood of your risen Savior,

ALL for you.

So don't be afraid, but take your place in the fight AND at the feast, now and forever.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

*Preached by Pastor Holowach*

*Sermon text: Luke 12:49-56*